



THE EFFECTS OF GRADING STUDENTS' WORK

The case against grades

Created by Evidence Based Education
Based on the work of Alfie Kohn. 2011

1. GRADES TEND TO DIMINISH STUDENTS' INTEREST IN WHATEVER THEY'RE LEARNING

Many studies on the impact on intrinsic motivation of receiving grades (or instructions that emphasise the importance of getting good grades) has found a negative effect.

2. GRADES CREATE A PREFERENCE FOR THE EASIEST POSSIBLE TASK

Impress upon students that what they're doing will count toward their grade, and their response will likely be to avoid taking any unnecessary intellectual risks. They'll choose a shorter book, or a project on a familiar topic, in order to minimise the chance of doing poorly.

3. GRADES TEND TO REDUCE THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' THINKING

They may skim books for what they'll "need to know." They're less likely to wonder, say, "How can we be sure that's true?" than to ask "Is this going to be on the test?"

Grades do have a place in education, but only for clearly-defined purposes for which we would consider them valid - and even then, only if they are interpreted correctly by all those who use them.

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